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In the Absence of

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts
Creative Writing

by

Carol McCarthy

B.A. University of Illinois, 2004

May 2009

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The Disambiguation of Things: A (Kind of) Poetics

Language is packed with ambiguity. The disambiguation in language generally happens within a person's subconscious. For example, I could suggest that we all should eat hotdogs at Wrigley Field. When that phrase is uttered, my audience hears the statement and assumes that I am referring to a food product when I mentioned *hotdog*. It is unlikely that the ambiguity of "dog" or the phrase "hotdog" required anyone to think twice about whether or not I was suggesting we eat a hot dog, as in an animal whose body temperature is elevated. Of course the exception exists if my audience lacks the same base of knowledge of the English language, American-style food, etc. that I possess. Nevertheless, the disambiguation happens within the unconscious mind. Meaning and understanding become clear for both the speaker and the receiver in this instance.

Although disambiguation of language happens solely through the unconscious in a linguistic context, the disambiguation of things, situations, experience, happens organically within the self. It is this process that the poet seeks to reveal and expose through poetry. Poets look to poetry as a way to maneuver through the absence of meaning. The absence of meaning or reason is a scary place to hang out, but that's where I have found myself most of my life. I am a writer because I want to understand this life, and I want to try my hardest to interpret these "events [that] shift." However, I wouldn't characterize my poems as autobiographical. Barbara Guest explains that poetry is a "mysterious melody heard from elsewhere," a balancing act between reality and imagination. For me, life intersects with my imagination, and it is my job, as a poet in Coleridge's terms, to "sustain and modify the images, thoughts, and emotions of [my] own mind" in hope of illuminating the absence of meaning. Somewhere between consciousness

and unconsciousness, between reality and dreams, definition and the concepts which cannot yet be defined, is where my poems strive to take the reader. Often, the speaker of these poems finds herself in stasis; the speaker is allowed to contemplate the world around her, which allows her to look backward, forward, and, most importantly, to the “right-now” for meaning.

Revealing and exposing the true meaning does not happen quickly, though, a task that T.S. Eliot describes as the poet "trying to find the verbal equivalent for the state of mind and feeling" that she is experiencing. This verbal equivalent, the utterance, must be constructed in a way that not only pays close attention to the image, thing, or situation, but also to the language used in the expression. Meena Alexander, speaking of the poet's responsibility to poetry, has observed that poets use words as painters use color; however, she has added, words need to be rinsed clean because they have been everywhere. She spoke of this metaphor when she described the purpose of poetry in a time of war, and that the words and language that poets use need to be understood in a way that defines concepts in a new way.

The poet finds herself somewhere between consciousness and unconsciousness, between reality and dreams, exploring definition and concepts which cannot yet be identified, placing meaning in the absence of the understood. Ultimately, when confronting nothingness or possible ambiguities, the poet must pay close attention to what words she uses to convey the absence of meaning. For example, in my poem, “The Lion Sits by My Bedside, Only It’s Not a Lion Anymore,” the speaker seeks the right words to define what she sees and hears. What I hope to portray in this conceit is the possibility of death; however, what haunts the speaker may in fact be the uncertain distinction between death and life. The only thing the speaker can define is the sound of rain falling; it is the “mizzle [that] causes staccato applause,” but even so, the term

“mizzle” itself can only define something between drizzle and rain. The exactness in “mizzle” is itself ambiguous by definition, thus rendering the image, I hope as, fresh and rinsed clean.

Aside from the language, writing about symbols or the symbolic is a motivation for my poetry. Subjects such as death, life, Catholicism, and gender rear their heads in my poems. I strive to begin the process of disambiguating the meanings of the self as a girl, woman, daughter, and so on, for the speakers of the poems. For example, the image of the mother that occurs in some poems can be viewed in two ways. The first is to represent the speaker's maternal lineage: her first idea of the female, which then becomes the model into which the speaker needs to fit. The poem, “Why I’ll Never Learn to Iron Clothes, Fels Naptha Greasy Whites,” uses the domestic image of washing clothes, and I juxtapose those to images of “side of beef” and “bungalow” to suggest how the speaker considers female domesticity. For me, those two latter images connect me to my experiences in childhood, and images of my own mother in a modest, working-class neighborhood, as what the speaker recalls as the alternative life she shuns. Moreover, the image of the mother represents the female experience. In the poem, “Symbiosis, or Women are Vigorous and Need to be Tied In,” the speaker intertwines images of the mother, the Magdalene, and the botanical, or Mother Nature, in hopes of finding a kind of Jungian collective unconsciousness, specifically a female collective unconsciousness. If the latter poem celebrates the maternal, and the former shuns it, then the contradiction further highlights the absence of meaning within the speaker’s own definition of female or woman.

The poems in this manuscript are written in form or free verse. I do not consider myself a poet who finds traditional form a necessary component to writing poetry. Often I find that the subject matter will just work better within the confines of a more strict form, and I often make up my own form, à la Marianne Moore, as seen in the poem, “You Say Lime, I Say Kumquat,”

which adheres to a strict syllabic count. However, the poem, "Sleeping with the Chef," finds its content to be suitable for the sonnet in rhyme, but strays from traditional iambic pentameter. No matter what form, I find that following a pattern ultimately gives the poem another layer of meaning. However, when something or someone is defined, it loses its ability to be anything other than what defines it. That includes calling a sonnet a "sonnet" rather than just a "poem," as well as the naming or the classifying of one's state of mind.

Critics might think the diction in some poems erudite or just plain bothersome because it is not easily accessible. It is not my goal to stump the reader. I would ask that rather than scrounge for a dictionary, the reader take a moment just to feel the words and their rhythm. Let the sounds dance in the mind, seep in through the "temporal fenestra," and simmer in the organic way the senses process experience. Know that both poet and speaker, and now reader, might experience this sensation together. You may hear the "Guestian" mizzle outside, but you'll have to pay close attention.

Convergence

(OED.) The time between the flash and the thunder.
(euphem.) Let's hold hands
(n.) The act of coming together.
(math.) Approaching a limit.
(phys.) Eyes inward to focus.
(Plato) "The inmost eye."
(biolog.) Adaptive evolution.
(tech.) The Motorola C-340 phone is also a camera, recorder, and mp3 player.
(entomol.) The wings of wasps.
(fem.) He loves me he loves me not.
(pseud.) Marriage X.
(Eph 5:21) Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.
(ant.) Run like hell!
(syn.) Standing at the edge.
(naut.) Go in head first.
(onomat.) *Crash!*
(masc.) It's pheromones!
(21th C.) Globalism.
(interj.) Watch out!
(Grammatology) "The end of linearity is the end."
(derog.) Sometimes divergence is a good thing.
(NOW) "Women say pull out!"
(Confed.) *Y'all ain't like us.*
(counterterrorism) An army of one.
(dimin.) It's the best we can do.

The Body/Inconvenient

Sometimes I chop off my left
breast to make room
for the strap of my knap-sack,
carrying local vegetables from Tuesday's
farmer's market. Then when I stitch it
back, my fingers ache
from the tension of the darning needle
and twine, a careful weaving

in and out. On airplanes I dare myself
to remove the clasp
from the bend in my hip
in order to hide it
in the overhead bin. Never
stow body parts under
your seat.

My body invites neighbors to ask questions,
the kind that have obvious answers,
such as "How'd you do that, so callous,
without a trace of blood?"

Simple, I think. Don't you already know?
Some parts I feed to stray dogs.

OED Defines *Grrrl* as a “Self-designation”

Where’s *that* grrrl? that carnivalesque grrrl, burlesque grrrl
I was always a grrrl

Hey you, grrrl,
grrrls call you hot grrrl, punk grrrl,
butch grrrl, bitch grrrl, biblical Ester grrrl,
I was always blatantly sexual and raunchy...

And so what, smart grrrl, philosopher grrrl where
a grrrl in a hand is worth two in a bush
if Sokolowska had a portrait “Untitled, Grrrl”
A woman can be fun and babeular and still be sharp

Get-out-of-the-kitchen grrrl, you throw like a grrrl

Bored, grrrl? Ex-riot grrrl turned *that* grrrl—
say something, ersatz grrrl, word grrrl, fat grrrl, backwash grrrl,

gargle, grrrl, gargle

Google Portrait, Self with Surname of 8th Grade Boyfriend

The evidence is overwhelming: PhD, R.N., CPA, mother of two daughters,
Diana and Selena,
with the former thriving,
the singer I wanted to become.

Or, Sci-Fi movie star, Pulitzer Prize finalist, reporting on national affairs.

Far from me at a party one night,
misquoted as one who
“loves photography as a hobby,” yet
my testimonial on ecopress.com
claims you can find me at McLeanbible.org where I minister to the aging,

a medical missionary
and organizer of multi-cultural festivals,

while in the departmental directory—
blogspot, listserv, PDF downloads—

I am not pictured.

Bernadette/At Closing Time

The patron saint of asthma
inhales wisps of second-hand smoke
from a bar stool, listens to Cash's
Ghost Riders in the Sky over
and over on the broken
juke box. As the oldest child, she claims
no part in her name, assumes
no responsibility, although coins
are missing from the bartender's tip jar.

Over time, nothing changes:
confirmed girls take her name,
statues adorn altars, breaths become
shorter. And although

she's there for the spirits
and conversation, each lighted match
invokes another wheeze, as she mills
an Old-Fashioned and the night whizzes
by, until all gaunt faces disappear, until all
apparitions have left for the night.

Girl, Carbon-copy

She leaves things behind, on airplanes, on trains
She uses fine-tip ball-point instead of lead
She places chewed Bazooka in the seat pocket, in the arm-chair ashtray
She sketches outlines, titled *what I saw, what I should have said*
instead

girl bleeding at the ankles
girl lost and found
girl lost
dissipated lamp-black

girl hides in a padded carboy
at times visible
girl hides under carbon-sheets
at times invisible
girl leaves an imprint luminous, amorphous

The Virgin Sister

My sister used to leave me, waving
bugs away, on the porches of homes
she'd secretly visit. I was her alibi,
her get-it-on excuse, under our parents' radar,
for doing things to boys in the neighborhood. Shifty,
a master of disguise, she faked menstrual woes

for birth control, read *Sassy*
or *Seventeen* to learn the *10 Ways*
to Make Him Hot. I'd suffer through
90 degree heat as some lover's younger brother
flexed wrestling trophies, his gold and silver
medals. Beyond the din, I'd hear
my sister's wail, *Cosmo's* "love calls,"

then silence. Pink crepe paper strings
rustled from my bicycle handlebars.
Sweat draped along my neck, then
inside my knees. Around me,
yellow jackets circled and buzzed,
seeking a home.

An Apostrophe, or Bernadette Warns Her Not-yet First-born

I enjoyed my very first smoke
holding hands with a boy at Wilson Park.
I was thirteen and too young to know
wearing my tangerine-colored baseball
uniform would draw unwanted attention to me.
When Father found out (from Father John,

my pastor and coach,) he yelled, so I hid in the john.
My mother tried to calm him, but smoke
steamed from his eyes. She preferred to wait for me
to come clean, confess my sins; Dad ordered me to park
my butt on the chair. Grabbing a baseball
bat, he swung at the ringing telephone. I still don't know

who he was aiming for or why, but even now I know
that boy's name. Mark (or was it John?
Or Paul?) He was the sort who didn't play baseball
or any sport. Instead, clouds of smoke
trailed his every step. All I wanted was to park
myself at his side. It wasn't up to me

to decide who or what was really good for me
in those days. Time can be the best teacher. Now I know
why father forbid me to hang out at the park.
Later in college, I roomed with Jules Prejean,
a self-proclaimed "southern belle," who waved smoke
and mirrors about her, all the while blowing baseball

jocks in bathroom stalls at bars. One ball
season she made many trips to the health clinic, asking me
to be her "contact person." I said yes, so she bought me more smokes.
There's a point to my story, if you want to know:
she had no dad, no brother, no Pastor John
to keep her from bad girl-things in the dark

back in Morgan City. She'd been the one who'd park
with boys in the forest preserve, bring the beer to ball
games in high school, run off to the port-o-john
to smoke pot. There was no escape for girls like me
and our over-bearing parents, always saying "no,"
watching, witnessing, hidden behind car fumes and smoke.

With Michael, a Portrait

I.

& satsuma
& guava
& you sleeping soundly between the sheets of our bed
& my neck
& the morning
& the parking tickets piling up because we never move our cars on time

II.

My lover, while snapping his fingers to flamenco playing on the stereo,
reminds me that we are out of coffee and our morning routine requires me
to run out at 2:15 AM to fetch a bag of whole beans and a nectarine
for flavor.

III.

There is texture in the skin
of fingertips, of lips. Events shift
only if allowed. I can choke
an ox with my bare hands,
if he'll let me.

IV.

The Waiting

I blame her—
my mother, and her bad habits
in the seventies. Her

lack of vitamins, or
my lack of sex. Either way,
stories unfold, swaddled
in the litters of women who stroll
their Graco double-wides
down the Southport Corridor.

A friend, fresh out of surgery,
details her stages of healing—
first the scar, a nick of the belly,
then the blood that faucets
from her vagina,

then stasis.

As I wait
for the bus, another woman pontificates
population control—
we should all adopt!—
while stroking her kitty.

Symbolophobia

The day's mail, a new pair of slacks,
wedding vows, one pewter mortar
and pestle, barely used:

these things we've shelved,
now draped between hardcover books
and bed sheets.

Up north it's cicadas this year
and in the garden,
a girl who trellised her virginity
around our bougainvillea vines.

Promises of lavender? Instead,
dried curry plants, my blank verse:
"The tree in flower fruiting on the vine"

or "He loves me not." Either way,
it's a mean June and yet summer
is only beginning. Even inside,
flowers, dying on the mantle.

And nearer, two pictures beside
a birthday card, unsigned, three
translucent termite wings, one jar,
wine corks. Shall I light a candle? Shake
the snow globe?

Today, It Is Already Summer

I am fragments

paused thoughts.

Today I am sweat hungry
growing older
& dark quiet

hold me make a baby with me, today.

(Today I have a headache)

We are ripe today I am onions today
you are onions today look
at our garden we are growing old

& with us bamboo & mutts
& dishes piled in the sink.

Today, make it tomorrow already—
create fire & fear, monsoon
& winds things we should be saying

but can't. Today
make it like today.

Sleeping with the Chef

Shallots and french beans, Wusthof in hand!

The all-spice, saffroned-laced finger tips
blanched with chicken stock, *mis en place*,
mirepoix du jour. Scents that seep

through Sunday morning sheets, a peep
of light against your scratchy face,
a muscat-scat from your lips
seasoned with a pinch of marjoram.

But oh, for this! The cutting plank
across my thigh, the light of day
pestled by your morning snores,

with a sensual garlic kiss to thank—
your kitchen concubine, a way
to macerate my flesh from yours.

Why I'll Never Learn to Iron Clothes, Fels Naptha Greasy Whites

Not that I'm not handy,
nor that I prefer wrinkles to folds. Nor that
I prefer to keep bits of soil under my fingernails,
between my toes. Rather, I'm just not meant
to stay put in the basement of some bungalow,
crouched behind a furnace and a boiler,
lighting Kools up between each load in a damp

laundry room. Clotheslines aren't for me,
nor are the lines that divide his from hers.
I cut corners, cut calluses, grind that side
of beef into burger meat, eat it raw
before sex. I only cycle
on wash and wear, drape wet jeans
over steel gates, rub Fels Naptha
on poison ivy rash—
my hands somewhere beyond
your neck and the ironing board.

Bernadette/At Saturday Easter Confession

With no where left to hide, no
white-washed days, no bric-a-brac snow
stacked against bungalows and greystones,
she slipped into the dark confessional
of St. Alphonsius to smoke cigarettes
and sip from Old Style cans lifted
from her father's stash.

Spring's metamorphosis turned snow
into brown slush, her body now resembling
a character from her mother's copy of *Puberty Blues*.
In the darkness, she examined her fate—

she wanted to be saved from training bras,
her sisters' hand-me-down
histories, the impending resurrection of
orange softball uniforms, kissing boys
on porches. Down on her knees,
she prayed for forgiveness.

The Lion Sits by My Bedside, Only It's Not a Lion Anymore

A satchel of sage?

Or not, just the bed sheets
tied with a string of dental tape.

A voice from the past?

Maybe not. Or merely
the zizz of the lamplight, sounds humming

like the drone from a bagpipe, graveside.
After all, we all mourn differently.

Some plant copse, some grasp
suits at a local bar, hoping
to name their first-born after the deceased.

You can't really be grieving
when you're draped in belladonna,
mascara dripping, wind whipping up the scrim

of your skirt.

Mizzle causes staccato applause outside
my bedroom window. And at night
I still hear him snore.

When Sometimes At Night I Hear Gunshots, Then Tires Screeching

I will wake after the first shot,
place my fingers in my ears, wait
to hear sirens first. Although late
I think about calling the hot

neighbor guy. I surely will not
crawl out of bed. My hands will clasp
the windowsill, fatty lit, gasp
until I fog, 'til I forget.

Alleys of Chicago

(A priest said the devil hides between metal garbage cans)

Winter winds swirl scraps and scabs of skin from lips.

Featherstitched chain-link fences grow
from carotids.

Gray smoke fumigates milkweed sprouting from cracked concrete.

(shades color the neighborhood)

Back porch endemic radiates
faceless people devoid of
some city service.

(ebbed voices contuse a pitch-pipe overture only clerics sing)

Unmannered vacuous holes facilitate sounds of

sewer-logged police sirens.
(deftly unheard)

(tennis balls
garage doors)

Uniformed graffito plastered on faces
spray-painted white on white.
Each gate unmanned by the “beware of _____” sign.

Playing “Catch” with a “Dog”

My hand firmly gripped around the bauble,
we take chances on how the game is played:
toss, scatter, whimper, retrieve.

First it was the frisbee, caught
from some passing float in a parade, my hand
firmly gripped around the bauble.

I held that jewel close to my heart
as I gasped the scent of you—
toss, scatter (whimper). “‘Retrieve’

is rooted in both middle English
and French” you sang to me as your hand
firmly gripped around the bauble.

I offered up other options: tennis balls,
olives, hand-tied ropes for you to
toss and scatter. (Whisper to me

about the origin of vines and grapes).
Wine was no reprieve as I awoke with one
hand clenched firmly on a bottle

of Bordeaux, our bodies fused between the sheets,
two fingers draped over my lips, your hand
firmly gripped around my bauble:
(I) toss, (you) scatter, (I) whimper, (you) receive.

Borers

1:

/The flutterer/

O winger of wood, detritivore,
slender and stirring above
the paneled cypress door, silly
slick flutterer, settling for the wood
of my home, the juju of the you
who would not die,
who would not die,
like the crabs in the Grand Isle
waters.

2:

/The stalker/

Sometimes she wants him dead.
Sometimes she wants to destroy him
inside dahlia and other stems by slitting
him—and then them—with a sharp knife.
She wants the best method.
She read about using
a machine-oil can and wet clay
or putty. Read it works
well. Heard it only took
a few minutes before the trees
were found in vigorous condition.

3:

/alias/

Grub, auger, weed
in turfgrass,
narcissist, mocker,
trickster, hag-fish,
tool to ravage
such as (the Chinese use
ropes) rusty scissors.

4:

/Isopterophobia/

Somebody call an exterminator there's a moth in my house
Hurry someone has entered my house

Still Life with Postman

Scents left by you on my dresser
by way of a torn envelope

Sable and sage hanging from
my ceiling fan in the den

I once met a lion in Breaux Bridge

Louisiana (I brushed his coat
and he sang me a lullaby)

Lull time stands still

wishes granted one Tuesday morning
hung over on
two bottles of red wine

(the brown lemur nocturnal)

The mice evade glue traps

(I am forced to relinquish control)

and if I
open my mouth

bees swarm out

Deluge

What if, instead of *flood*,
we called it *baptism*. And twigs,
plastic bottles are mere trinkets
brought to us by pallbearers
for the tabernacle. The altar
my front steps. The swish and slush.

What if, instead, it was communion
that I slurp from sewer gutters,
chalice it, christened it your body
and blood.

If your hands clenched my neck.
Suspended me under.

The American Heritage Dictionary

below a daguerreotype
of Dorothea Dix,

on the same page where *DJ* is short
for “ditzy Jane”
(a boy once said about a girl
who questioned fate or faith),

defines *dizzy* /’dizi/:

“bewildered,” “confused,”
suggesting women must be
silly or scatterbrained.

One entry can define

DNR

DMZ

proximate to *divorce* and *divider*,
implying some basic difference.

At the point of divergence, mere definition dissipates...
(*Djakarta* transports us to *Jakarta*).

Ars Poetica

The inutility of a marionette, at best
a dance through a visceral page.

Sanskrit and little pasties?
Beauty as you believe

in sophistry, an enigma.
Her right hand a state,

lines sonorous and brisk.
A light dims the affection of something

not yet revealed by its adulation.
Open your ears and you can see

some beat she cannot sing.
Gaze closer and you can hear

her calloused hand knit
the colors of another tongue.

You Say Lime, I Say Kumquat

It's the orange-tree disease

 I warned you of in our backyard,
a thicket wedded to our bed,

or the moment you hypothesized

with one finger on my back,
 tracking and tracing the hackles
in graphite pencil. You said come

but instead I was led to a green

grove, blue as the cobalt room
 where I found you, one morning, ashed,
snakeroot and dogbane singed to skin,

boring holes in the thick of my womb.

It's the absent temporal

 fenestra I dream-sketched with you,
rinds and seeds swept under our rug

the night you muzzled my neckline, sweat

and sweet from tree-flower sap.

 You trussed my body as though it
were a wound, then you passed through me,

fruit unfound, virescent affliction.

Notes, from the Bedroom

Sometimes the light shines on letters stitched to the south wall. Through the fog, he reads to her some of their favorites. She cannot understand, he knows, but for him it is still 1956 and, locked arm in arm, they are watching Ed Sullivan on the reflection of a 1951 Buick. Pitching pennies. Stench of the Halsted Street fish market. For now, every day is the same. Cuttlebone. Eggs over-easy sampled between I-V feedings. A sip of a 1964 Bordeaux bought on the anniversary of their wedding. On good days she can remember moments—the jib of a mast on Belmont Harbor, furbelow of her wedding gown, childbirth and lye, beehives and pompadours. He kisses her forehead, stencils each word. When she departs, he'll add it to the wall.

Symbiosis, or Women Are Vigorous and Need To Be Tied In

It's my mother
 & her slow death,
the penitent Magdalene
climbing hollowed cinderblocks,

blaming toxic
 lead & hybrids.
Clematis or silver leaf
scurf pea. Her ovate shadow

in fertile soil,
 with skeins for arms
like scarves & ska rhythms, tinged
oriental bittersweet,

escaping slim
 clotheslines, alpine
& virgin's bower. She shears
layers from her scalp, wispy

ropes, blood & blue
 jeweled obelisks.
In some stories she sows seeds
in a drystone wall. Others

find her dormant,
 calyx or corm,
hallowing her tendrils, her
botanical epithets.

The Antiques Roadshow Host Said My Scrimshaw Is Only a Hippo Tooth

My gap-toothed mutt, Dingo, and I head through airport security. I'm a sleuth and a beggar and I can't remember if I brought my own teeth or a good bra. It doesn't matter because the vicious bunny in the next hot hot cabin is not wearing any underwear. I can hear it now, my father reminding me that fish is now a plaque because it made the mistake of opening its mouth. Patience, my dear.

I scored my ticket on hottix.com and lugged my scrimshaw, I mean, hippo tooth, in my carry-on. The men on the plane all wear laptops and speak of elaborate molecular structures but I have the wisdom, side-wheel, and carving at the bottom to guarantee authenticity. I want peanuts and ginger ale and to shout, "It's a split tooth, dammit!" But I resist.

On the show, when I am called, I haul my prize to the stage. The man working the table has big teeth, a mullet, and an orange glow. He speaks in a British accent. I don't care: I've got the Ivory surprise. He smells like malt-vinegar and I am aware of how my tits slump on my belly. (Forgot the bra). Nerves shot, I start humming *Fisherman's Song* because I forget the lyrics. In the distance I hear orange-glow-malt-mullet whispering "Africa" and "Paddle-Wheeler," and before I can mutter "Wow" and "Really" and "I never would have imagined" I realize I've left Dingo on the plane with the chemist-boys. So taking my tits in my hands and my scrimshaw, aka hippo tooth, in my armpit, I run off, chanting "It's curtains, Batman."

Months later, dogless and toothless, tits still in hand, I tune into the show on the local affiliate, my scrimshaw, I mean hippo tooth, teetering now on my mantle. I wonder what the whalers would have sung at sea?

Silenced

The thump
 then descent—
outside my bedroom window

another sparrow.

Outside My Bedroom Window They Are Pouring Beer on the Street

Across the street a woman
and a man meet, bottles in hand.
What's there to say? On the land,
splayed spots of blood. The news said an-

imosity was the cause. Can
we be forgiven for the word
that will lead us to some accord—
liquid prayer on concrete? Contrition?

Notes

OED Defines Grrrl as a “Self-designation”— Italicized lines taken directly from the Oxford English Dictionary.

Vita

Carol McCarthy was born and raised in Chicago. She currently lives in New Orleans' Irish Channel neighborhood with her husband, Michael Nelson, and their stinky dog, Tchopper. She works as an Adjunct Instructor of English at Delgado Community College. She also slings coffee and pastries at Still Perkin'. She has been accused of "working like an immigrant," and blames her proclivity for keeping busy on her father. Her writing has appeared in journals such as *Rattle*, *Natural Bridge*, *eratio postmodern poetry*, *The Diagram*, and *Weave*, among others. She hopes to continue her scholarship and research on "Degendered/Degendering Poetics" and Marianne Moore.